DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 256 332 IR 011 652

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TITLE A Rhetorical and Structural Analysis of Instructional Television.
PUB DATE Jan 85
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (Anaheim, CA, January 17-23, 1985). For entire proceedings, see IR 011 621.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Education; *Educational Television; Elementary Education; Evaluation Methods; Foreign Countries; Grade 6; Grade 7; *Production Techniques; *Rhetorical Criticism; Semiotics; Social Studies; Videodisc Recordings
IDENTIFIERS Instructional Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

The educational television series "Across Cultures" was evaluated to examine the effectiveness of the series and how the programs were structured to attain objectives. Designed to complement sixth- and seventh-grade social studies textbooks, the series on world cultures is composed of thirteen 15-minute programs about three widely divergent cultures on three continents: Osakans (Osaka, Japan); Tarahumara (Sierra Madre mountains, Mexico); and the Baoule River people (Yrakrou, Ivory Coast). Evaluation methods included a rhetorical analysis of the documentary and a semiotic analysis of the text. The semiotic analysis focused on three structural devices: time, edits, and forms of address, including narration and camera focal distance. Findings indicate that the program conveys the concepts of culture and cultural independence and familiarizes students with the cultures used as examples of the wide range of diverse world cultures. It was also found that the portrayal methods encouraged student appreciation of the Japanese culture, but the portrayal of the Tarahumara and the Baoule worked against the development of cultural appreciation. Twenty-five references are listed. (LMM)

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A RHETORICAL AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION

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Introduction

As an area of instruction, social studies has been considered unsatisfactory. The amount of time spent in teaching social studies is far less compared with reading and mathematics (Department of Public Instruction, 1982), social studies lack uniformity and predictability (Superka, Hawke and Morrissett, 1980), and teachers use textbooks most of which are well over five years old as their bases for reading, discussion and evaluation (Shaver, Davies and Helburn, 1979). With the ever present textbook in the classroom, the most extensively used instructional practices in social studies are lecture and discussion (Superka, Hawke and Morrissett, 1980).

Given the state of social studies teaching across the United States, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (or DPI) conducted a survey to identify the needs of social studies teachers in Wisconsin. Among other things, this survey identified the need for an in-school television resoource series for middle schools. It was on the basis of this expressed need that the Wisconsin Educational Television Network and the Agency of Instructional Television (AIT) funded planning and production of a world culture series. This world culture series subsequently called ACROSS CULTURES,was the subject of this study.

In the area of global education, teachers can use television to help students develop inferences about the concept of culture. However, reading a television on world cultures from a geographical and cultural distance can be problematic. The possibility of "domesticating" foreign cultures is real because what is alien tends to be translated into the familiar. Is it possible to understand the meaning of a television presnetation on foreign cultures as contexted in its own terms?

The use of a television documentary to help teach concepts of world cultures is new. ACROSS CULTURES is a pioneering effort in this regard. It would be instructive to find out if the communicators of ACROSS CULTURES achieved their objectives and to analyze the methods used to to communicate intended concepts.

Statement of the Problem

ACROSS CULTURES was produced in response to the need of social studies teachers for a television series that cover world culture topics. What were the stated objectives of the communicators of ACROSS CULTURES? How was ACROSS CULTURES structured to attain these objectives? This study attempted to address these questions.

Related Literature

From its very inception, cinema can be seen as divided into two main categories which remain essentially the same even today: the realistic film or the documentary and the fiction film (Levin, 1971). The documentary supposedly uses conventions of objectivity, respect for the material and a sense of real life. Objectivity in the documentary however, is problematic. Does the real world exist as an objective fact we can look at or is it something that is constructed by people through their intelligence, labor and imagination or is it a combination of all of these? How do we use the art to express the meaning of the real world? Williams (1980) philisophizes that as yet, we have no overarching theory which deals convincingly with all the factors that make the real world and its expression on film and their relations with each other. Along this vein, Bluem (1968) and Sandall (1974) claim that the processes of selection and arrangement which take place during perception and transmission are fundamental to both the artistic (subjective) and the journalistic (objective) communication of the documentaty.

Historically, the documentary has drawn much from the working procedures and validation techniques of anthropology. Indeed the documentary is replete with ideological and cultural codes. When a film maker from one culture makes a film on another culture, there is bound to be poor communication and a clash of codes (Gabriel, 1982). Several researchers (Eco, 1977; Sontag, 1982; McDougall, 1974; Mead, 1974) have documented the difficulties outsiders encounter when they try to capture on film cultural expressions.

The history of the documentary in theory and practice, is interpretative and socially oriented. The Griersonian documentary which used direct address was overwhelmingly didactic and presumptuously authoritative (Lovell and Hillier, 1974). Another style, the documentary which used indirect address rejected the viewer supossedly capturing reality. However, this transparency was rejected as an effect produced in and upon a system of signs and codes where signs were used as the equivalent of commentaries (Nichols, 1978; Harpole, 1980; Hanson, 1977).

1980; Hanson, 1977). Subsequent documentaries which incorporated direct address into footage by using interviews were not much different; the voice of the text took the form of characters directly speaking to the audience. Interview-footage documentaries were really not very different from the authoritative direct address documentaries; interviews were used to support footage with out the footage itself being questioned. Nichols (1983) proposes a major documentary style- the self-reflexive documentary as one which possesses a textual system that asserts its own voice in contrast to the voices it observes and recruits. Direct and indirect address are mixed using observation and exposition to arrive at a dual level of reference, that of evidence and argument. Bellman and Jules-Rossette (1977) did a study along a similar vein, they claim that they are just beginning to discover the scope and importance of perspectival variations and the influence of the immediate social context upon the structuring accounts.

The documentary is socially oriented and aimed at social and political change. Rhetorical communication aims at persuasion and if the documentary is accepted to be a form of rhetorical communication, then it can be scrutinized rhetorically. Along this this line of reasoning, Winters (1963) analyzed a documentary, THE RIVER using Burke,s (1951) rhetorical format. He attempted to find out whether the communicators of THE RIVER achieved their objectives by analyzing their purposes, the setting, agents and strategies. Winters' analysis of the strategies used in THE RIVER focused on the content; he concluded that the communicators of THE RIVER used familiar names , contrast and problem solution as techniques of persuasion.

One way of determining the effectiveness of the strategies used to attain objectives is by subjecting the text to a structural analysis. The assumption is that meaning is a function not only of content but also of form. Images don't speak for themselves, the role of technique, form and style highlight an instance of construction (Nichols, 1983). In the text of the documentary, one can trace out a scheme of reference which presides over the formation of the message (Bettetini, 1973). Therefore, a study of the structure of the documentary yields insights into the manner in which the maker interprets the objects of the documentary which in turn can be related to the attainment or non-attainment of stated objectives.

Procedure

The purpose of this study was to find out if the communicators of ACROSS CULTURES attained their objectives

and to find out how ACROSS CULTURES was structured to attain stated objectives. ACROSS CULTURES is a videotape series on world cultures designed to compliment sixth and seventh grade social studies textbooks. It is presented in a documentary format. The series is composed of thirteen 15-minute programs about three widely divergent cultures in three continents: Osakans in urban Osaka, Japan; the isolated Tarahumara in the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico; and the Baoule river people in the village of Yrakrou near the capital city of Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The theme of the series is that of maintaining peace in the world by respecting cultural differences. The first three programs introduce the three cultural groups, the next seven programs describe the institutions within these three cultures and the final three programs describe their linkages with the world.

Two methods of analysis were used: a rhetorical analysis of the documentary and another, a semiotic analysis of the text. Rhetorical analysis was done using a modified version of Burke's (1951) rhetorical format. It attempted to answer the questions: what was done, when and where it was done, why it was done and who did it. The semiotic analysis of the text examined three structural devices namely: time, edits and forms of address which included narration and focal distance of the camera.

Time was defined as the total and average amount of time devoted to each culture within each program and across Programs 4 to 13. The first three programs were excluded because these were introductory programs portraying exclusively one culture in each program.

Two forms of address were analyzed. These were narration and focal distance of the camera. These were considered forms of address because they implied a position for viewing. For this analysis, three programs were systematically chosen from Programs 4-13 to constitute the sample. The sample programs were Programs 5 (The Environment), 9 (Sports, Society and Self) and 13 (Choices for the Future).

To quantify narration, the following steps were taken: 1) Shots portraying each culture were identified and counted. A shot was defined as constituting visual images between edits, the uninterrupted flow of images that the camera shot at one point in time. 2) Narration in these shots were classified as synchronized (on-camera) or non-synchronized (voice-over). 3) The frequency of on-camera

and voice-over narration in all shots for each culture were determined.

Analysis of focal distance was done by 1) Defining the ranges of the distance of the object to the camera using Becker's (1983) definition.

Long shot (LS) - full shot of an entire area
Medium long shot (MLS) - shot of entire body, long distance
Medium shot (MS) - shot of one or more persons, waist up
Medium close-up (MCU) - shot of a person, shoulders up
Close-up (CU) - Shot showing detail

2)Determining the frequencies of each of the range of focal distance in all shots devoted to each culture in the sample programs.These frequencies were used to describe treatment of the three cultures.

The third structural device that was examined was edits. Edits were classified as either cuts or fades. A cut was defined as a switch from an image to another (Monaco,1981, p. 427). A fade was defined as the gradual disappearance of the image onscreen and the gradual appearance of another. The frequencies with which fades or cuts were used for each culture in the sample programs were determined. These frequencies were compared and used to describe the structure of ACROSS CULTURES.

Findings

The Rhetorical Analysis

A series of national studies identified issues in social studies education which need to be addressed in Wisconsin in the 1980's. On this basis, the WETN conducted a survey. Among other things, this survey identified the need for an in-school television resource series for sixth and seventh grade social studies. WETN in consultation with DPI formed a committee to specify goals and content for the series. The committee was composed of six members who possessed theoritical and pedagogical expertise.

ACROSS CULTURES has two major objectives: 1) to help students understand the concept of culture, and 2) to encourage students to become familiar with and appreciate the broad range of cultures in the globally shared culture (WETN, 1983, p. 106).

ACROSS CULTURES was produced by John Robbins of Positive Image Productions (PIP) and Peter Coombes of the Academy of Research, Instruction and Educational Systems (ARIES). John Robbins is an expert with extensive local and international documentary making experience. The producers went on a reconnaisance trip using the content

outline made by the content committee as a guide. This content outline which was subsequently used as the guide for on-location taping was revised on the basis of reconnaisance results. It should be pointed out though, that final decision on the revisions were made by only two of the content committee members, in a sense reflecting their own synthesis.

ACROSS CULTURES was produced at the cost of $367,000. WETN provided $150,000. Various agencies across the United States and Canada provided $179,180. AIT provided the rest through sales of the series to state and provincial agencies (DeRose, 1983).

Planning and production of ACROSS CULTURES took place between 1981 and 1983. The series which is available only on videotape, began broadcasting in January 1984.

The Structural Analysis

The analysis of the text indicates a favorable portrayal of the Japanese. Their time on screen is longest when compared to the Tarahumara and the Baoule. (See Table 1). Within the time they are portrayed, positive aspects of their culture are emphasized. Camerawork is similarly used, close-ups portray Japanese flexibility in adopting western technology (especially in Program 13-"Future Choices") . Among the Tarahumara, close-ups are used to emphasize their dirty environment (Program 5 "The Environment") and their gambling habits in the only thing they excel in- running (Program 9- "Sports, Society and Liesure"). The Baoule are treated somewhat impersonally, they are shown at a distance, mostly with medium long and long shots (Table 2). Throughout the series, narration is presumptuously authoritative. The narrator appears in sync in the beginning shots of the segments for each culture to present the thesis of his exposition. Supporting evidences are mounted in subsequent voice-over narration, this narration sets in place bits of argumentation that the image track illustrates with redundancy. (Table 3).

Data in Table 4 shows that the shots portraying the Baoule and Tarahumara were joined mostly with cuts. Fades were used mostly as a transition device, a segue from one segment to another. This was not the case with the Japanese. There were almost as many fades as there were cuts between shots. This could reflect careful editing but it can also reflect positive treatment where the negative aspects are shown in rapid cuts. For example the scenes on the tragedies like earthquakes and fire were shown in less than five seconds as if to diminish its importance/significance.

Conclusions

ACROSS CULTURES conveys the concepts of culture and cultural interdependence. It familiarizes the students

Table 1 Time (in seconds) devoted to each Culture in Programs 4-13 of the "Across Cultures" Videotape Series

Program Number	Introduction	C U L T U R E			Credits	Total Time
		Japanese	Tarahumara (Mexico)	Baoule (Ivory Coast)		
4 (Providing Family Needs)	51	267	203	282	46	849+51*= 900 (15 mins)
5 (Environment)	51	229	380	194	46	900 (15 mins)
6 (Religion)	51	318	219	266	46	900 (15 mins)
7 (Passing on Traditions)	51	353	204	238	54	900 (15 mins)
8 (Education)	51	312	164	319	54	900 (15 mins)
9 (Sports, Society and Self)	51	274	341	170	54	900 (15 mins)
10 (Communication)	51	426	175	194	54	900 (15 mins)
11 (Cultural Exchange)	51	407	239	149	54	900 (15 mins)
12 (Cultural Change)	51	380	295	120	54	900 (15 mins)
13 (Choices for the future)	51	342	224	176	54	847+53*= 900 (15 mins)
T O T A L		3300	2444	2108		
A V E R A G E		330	244.4	210.8		

*non-specific to a culture

Table 2 Frequency of use of focal distance range in all shots of segments by culture, Programs Five, Nine and Thirteen

	Japanese					Tarahumara					Baoule				
	LS	MLS	MS	MCU	CU	LS	MLS	MS	MCU	CU	LS	MLS	MS	MCU	CU
Program 5 (Environment)	15	-	2	2	9	8	-	5	2	10	6	2	1	1	-
Program 9 (Sports, Society and Self)	13	2	3	-	-	17	3	10	2	13	7	2	6	3	5
Program 13 (Choices for the Future)	8	-	11	2	16	1	21	11	-	3	1	21	11	-	4
T O T A L	35	2	16	4	25	25	25	26	4	26	13	25	18	4	9

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Table 3. Frequency of narration in shots by culture, Programs 5, 9 and 13

	C U L T U R E					
	Japanese		Tarahumara		Baoule	
Program	On-camera	Voice over	On-camera	Voice-over	On-camera	Voice-over
5 (Environment)	3	23	3	22	3	7
9(Sports,Society & Self)	-	18	2	43	-	18
13(Choices for the Future)	2	14	-	21	-	21
TOTAL	5	77	-	86	3	56

Table 4. Frequency of edits, all shots by culture, Programs 5, 9 and 13

	C U L T U R E					
	Japanese		Tarahumara		Baoule	
	Cut	Fade	Cut	Fade	Cut	Fade
Program						
5(Environment)	8	18	20	5	6	4
9 (Sports,Society and Self)	12	6	43	2	18	3
13(Choices for the Future)	28	8	15	6	13	8
TOTAL	48	32	75	13	37	17

with the three cultures which are presented as examples of the wide range of diverse cultures in the world. The manner of portrayal encourages the students to appreciate the Japanese culture, one which is similar, at least technologically, to the West. However, the portrayal of the Tarahumara (Mexican) and the Baoule (Ivorian) works against the development of appreciation for these cultures. The series is structured so that the audience identifies with and appreciate the Japanese but it is prescriptive of the Tarahumara presenting western technology as solutions to their problems. The series implies urbanization and foreign trade as inevitable/ desirable future choices for the Baoule. A videotape which aims to help students develop appreciation does not offer prescriptions.

ACROSS CULTURES is replete with ideological and cultural codes. It illustrates the problems of realistically portraying cultures from the outside. ACROSS CULTURES does not present the "truth" from "facts" because the objective and neutral videoist does not exist. The implications of this study are: 1) There is a need for closer cooperation between those who decide the content of instructional materials such as a documentary, and the producer because the actualization on tape of the intentions of the content committee is mediated by the producer. The gaps between intended and actual portrayal of the three cultures in ACROSS CULTURES were inevitable given the instructional design used. 2) It is highly desirable to incorporate the participants' perceptions of their activities which are portrayed on tape even if they have to be trained, 3) Given the constraints of the documentary process, it is imperative that the viewers be made aware of the conditions under which the documentary was produced so that they can make their own conclusions, and 4) A rhetorical study of the documentary can aid in the development of a "rhetoric of the documentary film or videotape" in much the same way as Aristotle's Rhetoric has the scholar of oral discourse. Such rhetoric which should include analysis of both content and form could reveal the manner in which the documentary can be designed to achieve stated objectives

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